

Washing of a male Splendid Fairy-wren by a female – At our cottage in Denmark we have a bird bath set in remnant natural bush, the habitat of many birds including a colony of Splendid Fairy-wrens *Malurus splendens*.

In the warm weather the bird bath is a popular sport for all the birds such as Honeyeaters, Twenty-eight Parrots, Red-capped Parrots, Western Rosellas, Grey Fantails as well as the wrens.

It was noted that only the female wrens used the bath. After each dip, instead of preening in the vicinity as other birds did they would fly into secluded patches of scrub. The answer to their flit into the scrub came on 1 February 1996, when my wife and I watched a male wren being “washed” by a female. The female would splash into the bird bath then fly very “soggily” to the male, where she would snuggle up to him and energetically fluff her wet feathers and shake water droplets onto him. The male then preened himself. The washing operation was repeated two more times.

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**Brahminy Kite on the Swan River**  
– When walking my dog along Freshwater Bay foreshore early on 13 February 1997, I was very surprised to see a Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*) perched on the very top of a tall Norfolk Island Pine growing near the base of the Claremont Jetty. The most southerly locality for this bird

given in the *Atlas of Australian Birds* is Shark Bay, and some readers (particularly those with little experience of the Kite) may doubt this record, based as it is on a single sighting. However, the bird's call and the chestnut plumage and white head gleaming in the sunlight left no room for uncertainty.

I first met the Brahminy Kite (then known generally as the Red-backed Sea-eagle) on the Ord River in 1944, when Kites and Ospreys were seen patrolling Carlton Reach – now inundated by Lake Kununurra. In later years, I have seen the Brahminy Kite frequently at Broome and in South East Asia, the most recent occasion being off Changi Beach, Singapore, a month earlier than the Swan River sighting.

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**Red-tailed Black Cockatoo Feeding on Berries of Cape Lilac** – During the latter part of July 1996 while visiting Merredin, I noticed that the Red-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus banksii* was feeding on berries of Cape Lilacs *Melia azedarach* growing in the housing areas of the town.

The trees were devoid of foliage at the time and the birds were plucking the berries from their stems, slicing through the flesh and splitting the seed capsule longitudinally, extracting the seeds and then dropping the flesh, split capsule and skin onto the ground. Some of the berries dropped were split into two parts but most of those discarded were